Training Teachers and staff to recognize symptoms of allergic reactions

Students with life-threatening food allergies often receive accommodations under Section 504 that will help to avoid or decrease a student's likelihood of being exposed to allergens during a school day.

- Physical Symptoms include eczema, hives, flushed ears, raised bumps on the tongue, and dark circles and bags under the eyes.
- Verbal Student may express "My lips feel tingly", "My throat feels tight" which may indicate an allergic reaction.
- Behavioral Sudden changes in mood and behavior
 - Some food allergies have been linked to hyperactivity and aggression
 - Other behavior can include: whining, clinginess and crying
 - Even small traces of an allergen may cause hives, welts, and swelling that may restrict breathing and possibly case death

II. What responsibility does a school district have to investigate all reports of harassment when related to a student's disability?

- A school district is responsible to investigate **ALL** reports of harassment that appear to be related to a student's disability.
- Failure by a school/district to act promptly may result in **liability** whether or not the harassment triggers a life threatening allergic reaction.
- Greenport (NY) Union Free Sch. dist. 50 IDELR 290 (OCR 2008).
 Parents proved that their children were harassed by peers because of their severe peanut allergies, however, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) found the school district
 NOT liable because the district did act promptly and effectively when responding to the each of the parent's complaints.
 - District investigated each allegation
 - Disciplined the students involved
 - Addressed the 5th & 6th grade classes about disability harassment

III. What can you do to make school safer for students with food allergies?

- Learn and follow applicable state and federal laws or district policies that apply including ADA
- Identify a core team to establish a prevention plan to promote food allergy management
- Ensure that all staff members who interact with the student on a regular basis understand a student's food allergy, can recognize symptoms, and know what to do in the event of an emergency
- Practice student's food allergy plans for efficiency and effectiveness
- Coordinate with the school nurse to ensure that medication is stored properly

- Students should be allowed to carry epinephrine
- Only designated trained school personnel should administer medications.
- Be prepared to handle a reaction and ensure that there is a trained staff member available to properly administer medications, during the school day regardless of time or location.
- Review school policies and student's plan and make necessary adjustments to improve effectiveness of a plan after a reaction has occurred.
- Include food-allergic students in school activities.
- Train school district transportation administrators to ensure that school bus drivers also know what to do should a reaction occur.
- All school buses should be equipped with communication devices in case of an emergency.
- Enforce a "No-Eating" policy on school buses with exceptions made only for special needs students with accommodations provided by the law and/or district policy.
- Plan with parents, of food allergic student, for appropriate strategies for managing food allergies when student is on a field trip.
- Always follow district, federal, state and local laws and regulations when sharing the student's medical information.
- Always take threats of harassment against students with allergic reaction seriously.

School food allergy program available

The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network's school food allergy program is a comprehensive, multimedia program that includes a video, EpiPEN®trainer, poster, and binder filled with more than 100 pages of information and standardized forms. Schools from across the country use the program to keep students with food allergies safe. For more information, visit www.foodallergy.org/school/sfap.html



School Law News, November 2008